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“Chicago Public Housing Demolitions and Individual Sense of Political Belonging”

Connor Hooper

Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program

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Abstract

Brian Jacob and other scholars have pointed out how public housing in inner city areas has affected labor supply, student achievement, and a sense of belonging. However, little research has been conducted on how such particular public housing developments have shaped political orientations among low-income residents. The purpose of this research is to understand whether or not the individuals' experiences with public housing demolitions across Chicago have affected voting participation, civic engagement, and political interest and efficacy among African-Americans who in the past have lived or currently live in Chicago public housing. Over 35 Chicago public housing residents who were either forced to relocate or who chose to move on their own prior to federal plans for demolition were surveyed. Findings were analyzed by utilizing STATA. Evidence suggests that relocation does not impact political engagement among residents who were forced to relocate; however, analyzing mean scores of survey data that measured voting participation in the 2012 presidential election, local elections, and congressional elections in 2014, residents who were forced to relocate voted at lower levels and were likely to vote at lower rates in the 2014 congressional elections. Also, residents who were forced to relocate demonstrated more neighborhood trust and tended to do favors for their neighbors at higher levels than residents who were not forced to relocate. In addition, evidence suggest that residents who had better than average experiences with Chicago public housing were more political efficacious than residents who had worse than average experiences with public housing. This research ends with a discussion of policy implications explaining how residential mobility impacts voter turnout rates and necessary steps to resolve such issues.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify how Chicago public housing demolitions have impacted African-Americans' individual sense of political belonging. Scholars have indicated that in 2003 alone, 97% of public housing residents in the Chicago Robert Taylor Homes relocated to neighborhoods that had poverty levels greater than 23% and were predominantly African-American (Venkatesh, Celimli, Miller, and Murphy 2004). In 2000, the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation was launched; this ten year plan included the demolition of public housing developments across the city and revitalizing former sites with mixed income communities. This dismantling of housing impacted residents across the Chicago public housing spectrum and displaced large numbers of households. This study aims to explore how political engagement—including voting participation, civic engagement, political efficacy, and political interest—among former residents have been affected by their experiences with the demolition of their housing development. To do so, we compare their political attitudes and beliefs to other public housing residents who were not forced to relocate.

Throughout this study, we hypothesize that political engagement among former public housing residents, who had to relocate due to federal plans for demolition, decreased because of their adverse relocation experience; this displacement potentially attributed to diminished feelings of efficacy in their new communities and impacted their political involvement. We also hypothesize that political engagement, among former Chicago public housing residents, who

relocated due to federal plans for demolitions, potentially increased due to easier transitions into their new communities. Increased political engagement among this group could have been attributed to higher levels of political efficacy due to individual households being granted housing vouchers, while other individual households were not granted such relocation assistance. Here, political efficacy is defined internally and externally. Internal efficacy is the belief about one's own ability to influence government while external efficacy includes beliefs about the responsiveness of government officials to the concerns of the citizenry (Anderson 2010, 63).

Throughout this research, the main concept that is being tested is individual experience with public housing demolitions among residents. In this research design, independent variables include: 1) forced relocation (residents who were forced to relocate and those who were not); 2) experiences in public housing (worse than average and better and average); and 3) community connectors. We know that socioeconomic status among individuals is a strong indicator of political involvement (Gay 2001; Wilson 1998; Tate 1993). Socioeconomic status consists of such characteristics as an individuals' education, income, and occupation. However, this study moves beyond these individual-level characteristics to consider how experiences with public housing—including the dismantling of more than 82 public housing complexes —has shaped the political attitudes and beliefs of African American residents in Chicago. Drawing upon the policy feedback literature (Austen 2012; Venkatesh, Celimli, Miller, and Murphy 2004, Alex-Assensoh and Assensoh 2001; Wilson 1998; Cohen and Dawson 1993; Tate 1993), I hypothesize that

negative relocation experiences will be associated with decreased political engagement among public housing residents, while political engagement may actually be higher for those public housing residents who saw their housing situation improve after relocation.

The relationship that is being explored throughout this study involves the political orientations among Chicago public housing residents and how these political orientations were impacted due to federal plans for demolitions. Variation in political engagement is the dependant variable that is being explained in this study. The dependant variables that are being analyzed include: 1) political efficacy; 2) voting participation; 3) political interest; and 4) civic engagement. Little research has been conducted on how the demolitions of housing complexes impacted political involvement among public housing residents. Although a number of scholars have researched how inner city public housing areas affected human health, student performance, and labor supply, this research explores a different pathway. This research not only contributes to this discipline, but also enables one to understand wheher or not public housing demolitions across Chicago have impacted political orientations among residents.

Respondent data was collected via surveys and interviews from current and former residents who lived in such traditional housing complexes prior to their demolitions to now mixed income communities and scattered sites. Individuals who were asked to participate in this research only include the African-American public housing population of Chicago. These individuals come from a broad array of CHA housing developments across the city of Chicago and each provide insight into their

particular housing project. After having completed the data collection process, we analyzed the data and used basic statistics to draw our conclusions. This paper proceeds as follows. First, we discuss the implications this research has for studies of political inequality. We then review prior research on the political engagement of African Americans and examine the nature of public housing in Chicago. Next, we begin our examinations by analyzing the statistical political differences among my sample. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of how these variations help one understand how public housing and relocation experiences have affected individual political attitudes and beliefs among African-American public housing residents in Chicago.

Review of Literature

Preference Gaps in American Democracy

When viewing political involvement in the U.S., it is generally taken for granted that all Americans have equal accessibility. However, numerous scholars have pointed out that political inequality and preference gaps do exist in American democracy (Gilens 2009; Hacker, Mettler, Pinderhughes, and Skocpol 2004; Alex-Assensoh and Assensoh 2001; Gay 2001; Tate 1993, 157). Researchers have illustrated that government responsiveness varies across social groups. Statistical data reveal that when political views among low and middle income citizens differ from views of affluent Americans, government policy favors affluent individuals (Gilens 2009; Gilens 2005). Indeed, government tends to be least responsive to the political preferences of the poor (Gilens 2009; Gilens 2005). These issues not only

affect how individuals view government and political officials, but also demonstrate a perceived deception of true equality throughout the nation.

Additionally, preference gaps in government are not the the only inequalities that have and will continue to plague the American polity. Research demonstrates that there are major disparities among health status, economic power, and racial inequalities that frequently arise across different American social groups. For instance, Hacker, Mettler, Pinderhughes, and Skocpol (2005) show that African-American economic strength never has been as prominent as their white counterparts, and black poverty rates remain significantly higher than whites. In fact, past research illustrates that as of 2001, one quarter, 25.7%, of African-American men worked for poverty level wages compared to only 14.6% among white men (Hacker, Mettler, Pinderhughes, and Skocpol 2005). Statistics, including poor academic achievement in certain environments as well as the the integration of more mixed secondary education facilities, also are issues social groups face, especially blacks (Schlozman, Fiorina, Page, and Verba 2005; Duncombe and Yinger 1998).

African-American Politics

One would naturally infer that more minority representation among such government legislatures as Congress would translate into more political participation among minority voters. Research actually suggests that the election of African-Americans to Congress only rarely contributes to greater political involvement among black constituents and lower levels of political engagement

among whites (Gay 2001). However, since this research study entails housing in urban environments, we need to address how inner city contexts and social forces play a role among African-American political involvement. Tate's (1993) pioneering work explains how blacks emerged as a voting majority or near majority in large metropolitan areas and were able to play a larger role in political matters (e.g. electing their own representatives). This political empowerment was attributed to the Great Migration and relocation among whites from cities to suburbs during the 1960s and 1970s, known as "white flight" (Tate 1993). As with most urban environments, neighborhood poverty is a issue that continues to present itself with deleterious effects. In this context, valuable research has been conducted to delineate how urban poverty impacts African-American politics (Alex-Assensoh and Assensoh 2001; Wilson 1998; Cohen and Dawson 1993).

Alex-Assensoh and Assensoh (2001) depict that a high number of African-Americans do not experience upward mobility but rather find themselves stuck in impoverished and debilitated inner city environments. Thirty percent of poor African-Americans live in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty while more than 50% live in single parent households (Alex-Assensoh and Assensoh 2001). Furthermore, urban poverty researchers have illustrated how individuals who live in areas of concentrated poverty and single parent households have had substantial negative effects on socioeconomic mobility as well as organizational involvement. All these factors impact political involvement (Alex-Assensoh and Assensoh 2001; Alex-Assensoh 1998; Cohen and Dawson 1993; Wilson 1987).

Moreover, social forces are important in inner city contexts as well; they include, but are not limited to, with whom we work, live, socialize, and worship. Researchers have demonstrated that social forces not only play a key impact in determining individual choice, but also govern individual political attitudes and involvement (Anderson 2010). Since church plays a large role in the African-American community, it is important to understand how church attendance can influence political participation. Literature shows that high level attendance among African-Americans in politically active churches, consistently influenced blacks to vote regularly in elections as well as other partisan campaign activities (Assensoh and Assensoh 2001; Tate 1993). However, in a 1989 Detroit area study, Cohen and Dawson (1993) find that blacks who lived in the most impoverished neighborhoods held different political attitudes and beliefs as other blacks who lived in less poverty concentrated neighborhoods. As a result, the researchers determined that even though social contacts can provide political access, it is inhibited in poor neighborhoods (Cohen and Dawson 1993).

When keeping in mind the nature of this research and the discussed literature thus far, readers should be aware in which context it is being set. To remphasize, political participation among African-Americans can depend on such measures as poverty, marital status, church attendance, as well as socioeconomic mobility. Jones (1998) points out a noteworthy concept relating to urban poverty and joblessness: a neighborhood where people are poor but unemployed is much different than a neighborhood where people are poor and jobless. Throughout this work, Jones explores how the disappearance of work in the formal economy

contributes to inner-city “ghetto neighborhoods” and social isolation amongst individuals (Jones 1998). Now, we will shift our attention to literature that has been conducted on public housing and its impact in the city of Chicago. We begin by introducing the reader to necessary background information and point out linkages between Chicago public housing and African-American politics.

Public Housing in Chicago

In the 1940s, incentives to lodge returning soldiers from World War II spurred the construction of public housing across American cities. These developments not only were open to soldiers, but also to provide temporary housing assistance to lower-income American families. Throughout this time period, another phenomenon had occurred: The Great Migration. This migration included the relocation of more than 5 million African-Americans from Southern states to such industrialized areas as Northern, Western, and Midwestern cities. Thousands of Southerners inhabited the city of Chicago, resulting in population growth among the African-American demographic.

According to Petty (2013), African-Americans populating the city of Chicago settled between the south and west sides. This area was known as the “Black Belt.” With the Chicago population drastically growing, such areas as the Black Belt continued to enlarge, soon displaying signs of severe congestion. Petty notes that public housing in Chicago was distinctively segregated; the construction of the Ida B. Wells Homes in 1941 enabled blacks to fully access public housing as more than 18,000 families filed applications to live there. Over the years, additional public housing

developments were constructed and soon Chicago had numerous housing complexes and high rises city wide. This study has collected data that represents resident's political attitudes and housing experiences from a variety of housing developments. This data provides an insight into a number of housing projects. Such housing representation that is present in this study includes residents from: The Robert Taylor Homes, Cabrini Green, Rockwell Gardens, Stateway Gardens, Altgeld Gardens, ABLA Homes, Ida B. Wells Homes, and a number of other Chicago public housing complexes.

By the time of the latter 20th century, high-rise public housing began to be defunded by the city, state, and federal governments. The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) also began to allocate less funding to their housing complexes, essentially resulting in mismanagement and neglect in a number of developments (Petty 2013). This negligence resulted in building malfunctions and dilapidated housing complexes. These conditions residents faced are explained in great detail, as residents faced backed up incinerators, broken elevators, and infestations of roaches and vermin as well as rampant drug dealing, turf wars, and gun violence (Petty 2013). Other researchers have also illustrated that although Chicago had created the second most public housing units in the nation, the overcrowding of tenants across multiple housing developments were common and supply did not meet demand (Austen 2012; Venkatesh 2002).

Displacement and Housing Assistance

A number of scholars have illuminated how urban poverty not only has impacted political involvement, but also how the demolishing of 43,000 public

housing units have displaced tens of thousands of public housing residents – some still are facing displacement today (Anderson 2013; Austen 2012; Petty 2013; Goetz 2011; Goetz 2011; Venkatesh and Ceilimli 2004; Venkatesh 2002). Actually, literature on national public housing statistics has also made significant findings throughout this discipline. Along with retrieved data from HOPE IV programs, the Housing Urban Development (HUD), and 1990-2000 Census data, Goetz (2011) shows that public housing demolitions nationwide displaced African-Americans residents. In fact, out of the 87,251 household families for which demographics are available, 71,737 households were black (Goetz 2011). This number is striking because when interpreting this particular data set, one is able to better visualize how many residents who lived in public housing actually were black. In numerous works, Venkatesh (2002) explains residents of Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes faced a number of urban problems such issues included poverty, crime, and social isolation.

In addition, federal plans for the demolition of Chicago public housing have inspired individuals to narrate and edit first-hand accounts from former residents; delineating their housing experiences and their feelings regarding Chicago's Plan for Transformation (Petty 2013; Venkatesh Year 2002). Such firsthand accounts of former residents are also present throughout this research. Moreover, such councils as the Chicago Central Advisory Council (CAC) and Local Advisory Council (LAC) have been established to inform others about how Chicago public housing demolitions have affected these residents. The CAC and LAC consist of elected leaders and public housing residents that have served as a primary source to

educate educate civil administrators, academicians, researchers, legal advocates and others about how public housing in Chicago.

With these massive public housing demolitions in Chicago, the federal and local governments attempted to provide families with subsidized housing. Generally, subsidized housing includes affordable housing, Section 8, and housing vouchers for low-income households. Nevertheless, in such urban environments as Chicago, who had immense amounts of residents living in public housing, not all were granted such relocation assistance (Jacobs 2012). Anderson (2013) and Austen (2012) demonstrate that public housing residents across the city of Chicago utilized such vouchers to enter the private housing market, while others moved into rehabbed public housing developments or left public housing altogether. Also, as of 2012 there have been frequent cases of public housing residents wanting to repopulate their former high-rise site, which still were vacant lots though; in fact, there are approximately 2100 former public housing residents who currently live in mixed income communities citywide, while most others inhabited other Chicago neighborhoods and city suburbs (Austen 2012).

Looking at communities of resettlement, research indicates that residents of the Robert Taylor Homes who relocated in 2003, heavily populated other south side neighborhoods in Chicago. Englewood, Grand Boulevard, and Washington Park were the primary recipient communities among this group; at that time each neighborhood had percentages below the poverty level of 44.6%, 50.8%, and 51.8% respectively and all communities had a black population of 98%. With unemployment levels greater than 11.9% in these communities, joblessness also

seemed to be a challenge public housing residents had to face relocating to such neighborhoods (Venkatesh, Celimli, Miller, and Murphy 2004). Considering such statistics, it is appropriate to note that we expect variation in experiences with public housing demolitions among our sample. Some public housing residents found new and maybe better neighborhoods while other residents were likely frustrated by the process and not well served by government programs.

The proposed outcome of this study is to determine if there are any variations of political engagement among African-Americans who have now relocated as a result of public housing demolitions compared to public housing residents who were not forced to relocate. This research will help us to understand whether or not the individuals' experiences with public housing demolitions across Chicago have affected their political engagement.

Research Design

Respondent data used for the following analyses are original data collected via surveys as well as telephone interviews. The survey took approximately five to ten minutes to complete and consisted of questions that measured individual levels of political efficacy and interest, voting participation, and civic engagement. The survey questions consisted yes and no answer selections and four point likert scale questions ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). Throughout the study, these indicators measuring political engagement also served as dependent variables. In addition, the last section of the survey asked a series of questions related to individual public housing experiences. Since we are analyzing how political engagement changed among residents due to their public

housing experiences, we will direct most of our attention to analyze how political engagement differed in those who were forced to relocate and those who were not. After analyzing the survey data and utilizing data analysis and statistical software (STATA) and Microsoft Excel, we derive our findings by identifying relationship patterns within the samples; we are using the independent variable to explain variation in the dependent variables. In particular, we examine how public housing experiences correlate with political attitudes and beliefs.

Population Sample

The population sample that has been selected for this research includes African-Americans who have either previously lived in Chicago public housing currently still do. To be eligible for this study, participants had to been forced to relocate out of their buildings due to federal plans or move out of public housing on their own. Throughout the study, a small number of individuals indicated that they wanted to move on their own but federal plans for demolition accelerated their relocation process; therefore, these particular individuals have been included in the group who has been forced to relocate. Chicago has been selected as the survey selection site because Goetz (2011) illustrates that from 1990-2007, 16,461 public housing units have were demolished. Not only does this provide a great opportunity to recruit a decent sized sample of individuals who this research is applicable to, but also because many former public housing residents still reside in the Chicago area. However, survey responses also include data from individuals who in the past have lived in Chicago public housing and relocated to such cities as Milwaukee, WI, or other parts of Illinois. Paper and online surveys serve as instrumentation

throughout this research. Paper surveys were given to individuals in person while online surveys were used to make it more convenient for some individuals to participate, particularly those who are not located in the immediate Chicago area. These surveys were identical. In order to be eligible for this research, one has had to live in Chicago public housing and be African-American. To identify participants we utilized an array of networks that we personally know and also were referred to other viable participants by residents who completed the survey.

Design Plan

Since this research only lasted eight weeks, this research qualifies more as a pilot study. Due to analyzing a rather small sample size, the analyses that will follow cannot be applied to the entire population of African-American public housing residents in Chicago. The data collection was conducted over a six-week period between June and July of 2014. The short amount of time that was given to dedicate to this research certainly placed a limitation on getting a larger sample size. Therefore, this research serves as a pilot study because it is being carried out on relevant sample of the population, not the entire public housing population itself. Although limitations played a part in this research, this study includes 39 participants. Of these 39 individuals, 19 were forced to relocate out of public housing while the other 20 were not forced to move but relocated on their own prior to the demolitions. After the data was collected, we used survey data to gain insight into political orientations among African-Americans who in the past have lived or currently still live in Chicago public housing.

Results

Looking at internal and external political efficacy (dependent variables) among those who were forced to relocate and those who were not, we used factor analysis and mean scores to determine if there was variability between the two groups. We found that there was no statistical significance in residents who were forced to relocate and those who were not. Mean scores measuring internal political efficacy were 2.87 where relocation was not forced and 2.92 where relocation was forced. In asking residents if “contact with government should be avoided” (external efficacy) survey data shows that there is no statistical significant difference between both groups. On a 4-point scale, residents who were not forced to relocate had a mean score of 1.73 while residents who forced to relocate average a mean score of 1.63.

Survey data measuring voting participation illustrates participation in the 2012 Presidential Election, local elections, and the likelihood of voting in the 2014 Congressional Elections. The data indicates that in the 2012 presidential election alone, the difference in voter turnout rates were as follows: 90% of residents who were not forced to relocate voted in the last presidential election while only 68% of residents who were forced to relocate voted in election.

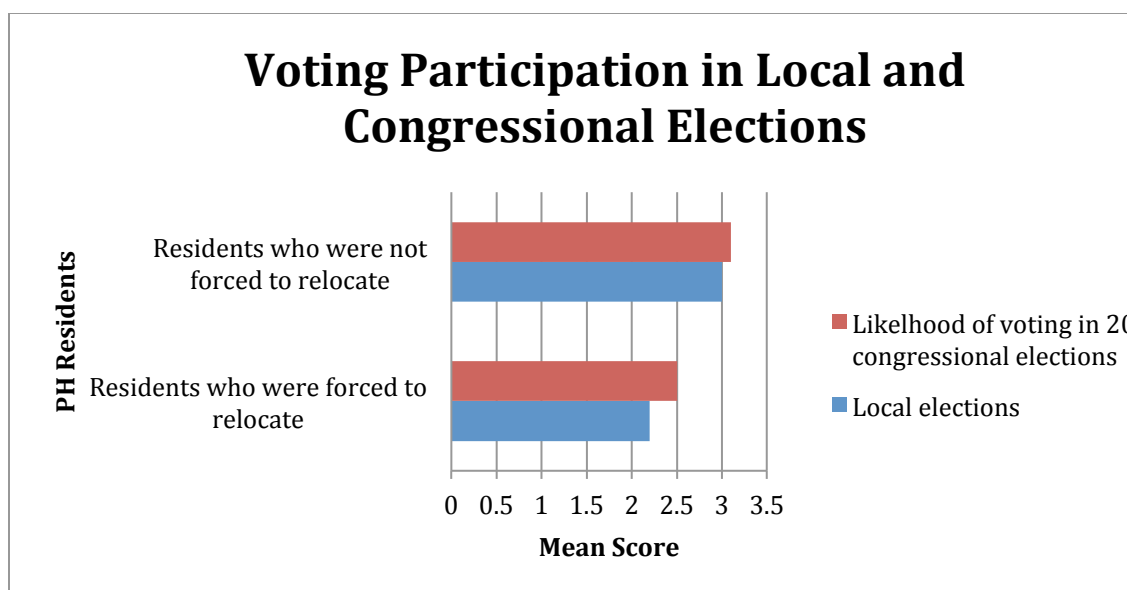


Figure 1

Analyzing voting participation in such local elections as for mayor or for school board and the likelihood of voting in 2014 congressional elections, evidence shows that residents who were forced to relocate voted and are less likely to vote at lower levels than residents who were not forced to relocate. Figure 1 demonstrates this point; residents who were forced to relocate had a mean score of 2.2 and 2.5 voting in local elections and their likelihood of voting in congressional elections in the fall, respectively. Public housing residents who were not forced to relocate had a mean score of 3.0 and 3.1 regarding their voting participation in local elections and their likelihood of them voting in the upcoming congressional elections, respectively. In addition, evidence shows that there are no statistical significant differences in both groups regarding their political interest and their likelihood of having contacted a public official to express concerns. Although evidence shows that there is no statistical significant among both groups and their feelings of internal and external efficacy, political interest, and government contact, survey data shows that residents

who were forced to relocate tended to vote at lower levels than those residents who were not forced to relocate.

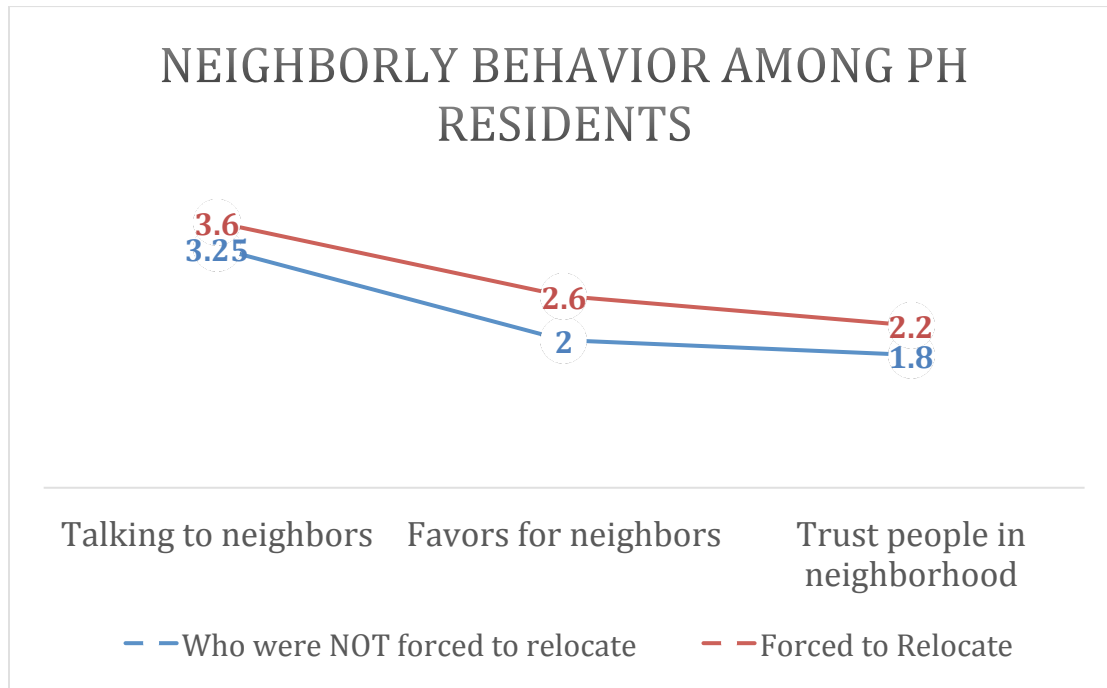


Figure 2

Levels of neighborly behavior (independent variable) among public housing were also measured throughout this study. Out of the residents who were forced to relocate and those that were not, evidence shows that residents who were forced to relocate actually demonstrated higher levels of neighborly behavior. Figure 2 illustrates that mean scores for residents who had to relocate, were higher regarding how much they talk to their neighbors or members in the community. Figure 2 also shows that doing favors for neighbors and general trusting of people in the neighborhood were higher than those who were not forced to relocate. By favors, we mean such acts as neighbors watching each other's children, helping with

shopping, house sitting, lending garden or house tools and other small things to help each other.

Furthermore, out of the population sampled, survey data shows that public housing residents who were forced to relocate populated different neighborhoods in Chicago or Chicago suburbs while other residents relocated to different cities in Illinois or left the state altogether. Out of the residents who were forced to relocate, 17 residents moved to different neighborhoods in Chicago. Out of these 17 residents, survey data indicates that nine residents relocated to neighborhoods that had similar levels of crime, violence, and gang activity as the communities they had left behind. Eight residents moved into communities that were safer; out of these eight residents, five moved into Chicago neighborhoods while three relocated to suburbs. Additionally, data retrieved from the sample indicates that 13 public housing residents currently reside in public housing or receive such housing assistance as housing vouchers and subsidized housing.

Analyzing the population as a whole, we also divided the sample into residents who had worse than average public housing experiences (independent variable) and residents who had better than average experiences with public housing in Chicago. Survey data shows that there are no statistically significant differences between residents who had worse than average and better than average experience measuring: external efficacy, political interest, and contacting government officials. However, evidence shows that residents who had better than average experiences in public housing were more internally efficacious than those residents who had worse than average experiences with public housing. Residents

who experienced better than average public housing conditions had a mean score of -.97333 while residents who experienced worse than average conditions averaged a mean score of .681333 respectively. This sample set had a p-value of 0.014083.

Also, at looking voting participation among those who had better experiences with public housing and those who had worse than average experiences, survey data show that residents who had better than average experiences with public housing tended to vote at higher levels than residents who had worse than average experiences. In the 2012 presidential election, voter turnout rate among those residents who had better than average public housing experiences in Chicago was 93% and turnout rate for residents who had worse than average experiences in Chicago public housing was 75%, respectively.

Discussion

Among residents who were forced to relocate and those who were not, evidence suggests that there are no statistically significant differences measuring internal and external efficacy or their response to “if government should be avoided.” However, we do find that residents, who were forced to relocate, tended to have lower voter turn out rates in the 2012 presidential election, local elections, and their likelihood of voting in this year’s fall congressional elections. Moreover, we know that residents who were forced to relocate and those who were not came from similar experiences within their respective housing development or in their immediate neighborhoods. We measured experiencing in public housing via four different aspect: 1) CHA neglect; 2) crime in their building or immediate neighborhood; 3) violence in their building or immediate neighborhood; and 4)

family exposure to gang activity their building or immediate neighborhood. With the exception of family exposure to gang activity, figure A1 in the appendix illustrates that both groups of residents came from very similar housing experiences.

Therefore, we cannot say that residents, who were forced to relocate, voted at lower levels because they had more adverse housing experiences. Additionally, we cannot generalize that residents who were not forced to relocate tended to vote at higher levels because they had less adverse experiences within Chicago public housing. Nevertheless, we believe that the relationship pattern we find among residents who were forced to relocate and their lower voter turnout rates are attributed residential mobility. Residents, who were forced to relocate, could potentially be voting at lower levels because they did not re-register to vote or register to begin with. High residential mobility among individuals usually translates into barriers for being a registered voter in the U.S. Registering to vote can be seen as an opportunity cost; identifying office locations, submitting forms, transportation, and time, all are incurred cost that individuals face when registering to vote. Therefore, a valid explanation as to why voter turnout rates among residents who were forced to relocate tended to be lower in all elections can be attributed their frequency of relocating (residential mobility) and the lack of urgency in becoming registered voters.

Neighborhoodly behavior among residents who were forced to relocate and those who were not also illustrated interesting patterns of relationship. A possible explanation to why residents who were forced to relocate demonstrated higher levels of neighborhoodly interaction, favors and trust could be attributed to their sense of

community. While conducting interviews, we spoke with public housing residents regarding their feelings of belonging in their respective housing developments and surrounding communities. Residents indicated that everything was shared among other families and everyone looked out for another. Generally, living in such housing developments, residents typically were familiar with one another. One could infer that residents who were forced to relocate potentially had higher levels of neighborly behavior because they actually maintained these community orientations they had formed in their prior housing developments. Also, those residents who were not forced to relocate who showed lower levels of neighborly behavior, potentially have transitioned out of this community mindset. This transition could be explained by them having grown accustomed to living in the private market or living in such neighborhoods where people just do not interact with one another compared to such neighborhoods where interaction is a frequent occurrence.

Analyzing the sample as a whole and categorizing residents into those who had better than average experiences with Chicago public housing to those who had worse than average experiences in public housing, we calculated mean scores of -.97333 and .681333 respectively. A score close to zero indicated that residents had better than average public housing experiences, while a score closer to one meant that residents had worse than average experiences within public housing. Experiences here are measured via CHA neglect of their buildings and apartment units, crime and violence in their housing development or surrounding neighborhood, and also family exposure to gang activity. In addition, we calculated a

p-value of 0.014083. Since this value is less than .05, we are 95% positive that if a larger sample were to be randomly sampled regarding their public housing experiences within Chicago, all participants response would fall within two standard deviations of the mean.

As the literature suggests, survey data also reveals that public housing residents either relocated to other parts of Chicago and Illinois, while some left public housing altogether. A potential explanation to residents that left public housing could be attributed to them not qualifying for housing vouchers the CHA were distributing. The only way CHA families were eligible for housing vouchers were if they had no delinquent records. Here, delinquency is understood as residents not breaking CHA contract laws while living in public housing units. Delinquency records were attributed to residents accommodating others who not were on the lease, living with felons, or even missing utility payments. This ineligibility is a potential factor explaining why some public housing residents within this sample left public housing.

Limitations to this study include that surveys were self-reported; self reported answers sometimes could impact respondent truthfulness and content validity. However, to maximize accuracy among residents and their political orientations, we utilized survey questions that have been previously developed and used; these questions measured internal and external political efficacy, voting participation, and political interest. Using questions that have been previously developed for other surveys and research studies, gives us a more reliable sense of participants and their sense of political engagement. Authors of this research

developed the survey questions that were used to measure if relocation was forced, public housing experiences, and community connectors. Snowball sampling was the method used throughout this research process. This method can be a limitation because community bias can play a role; participants were recruited for this research with the help of residents who also completed the survey.

Conclusion

This research study sought to understand whether or not individual experiences with Chicago public housing have impacted political engagement among low-income African-American residents. Measuring internal and external efficacy, political interest, and government contact, our findings indicate that there were no statistical significant differences among residents who were forced to relocate and those who were not. Since there were no statistical significant differences among our samples, these findings do not support the hypotheses that were made. However, survey data indicates that residents who were forced to relocate, tended to have lower voter turnout rates in past elections and their likelihood of voting in upcoming elections tended to be lower than those residents who were not forced to relocate. We attribute this finding to residential mobility among those who were forced to relocate and their frequency of moving. In order to become a registered voter in the U.S., requirements include that citizens indicate their new place of residence. This process constitutes barriers and opportunity costs for some; which is a plausible reason in explaining why voter turnout rates among residents who were forced to relocate, exhibit relationship patterns of lower

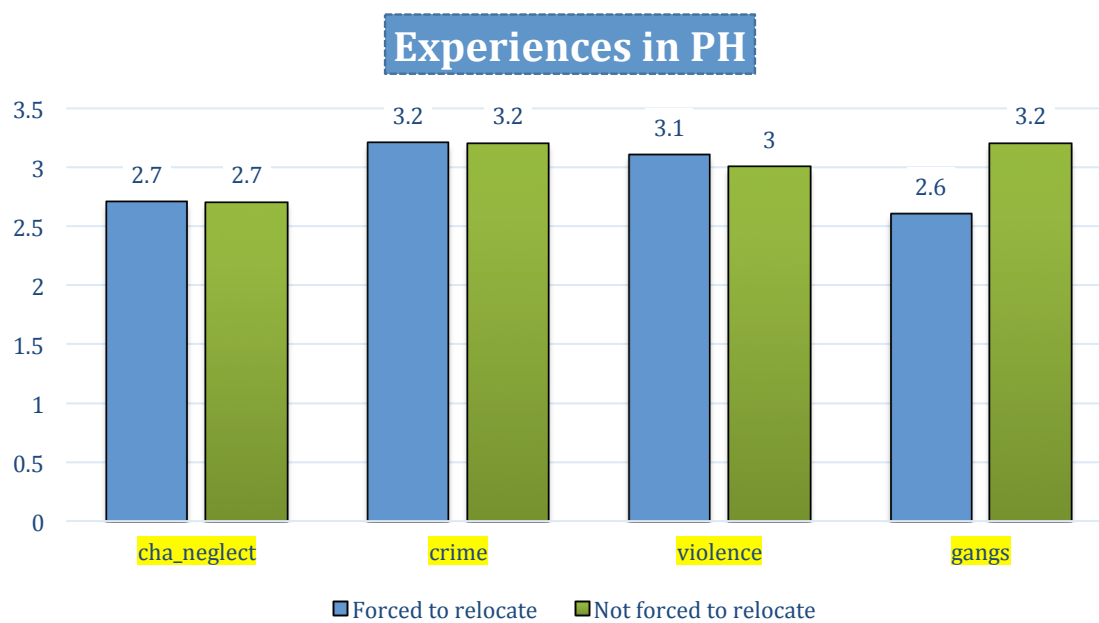
participation in national and local elections and their likelihood of voting in the upcoming congressional elections.

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Appendix

Figure A1: Summary of survey data measuring housing resident experiences within Chicago public housing and levels of CHA neglect, crime, violence, and exposure to gang activity in developments or immediate neighborhoods.



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